

children's teachers or take them to the doctor. And I asked Congress to extend the benefits of the law to employees of smaller companies, so that we can reach another 10 million American families. I want to thank Senator Dodd, who is here with me today, and Senator Kennedy and Representatives Clay, Woolsey, and Maloney for their tireless work on behalf of these proposals. With their leadership, I believe we will succeed in expanding family and medical leave this year.

I've often wondered how my own mother, when she was a young widow, would have been able to go away to train as a nurse if my grandparents hadn't been there to take care of me. My mother and I were lucky. So were many

other American families. But none of our families should have to rely on luck alone, and no American should ever have to choose between the job they need and the parent or child they love. If we use this moment wisely, we can help to ensure that they'll never have to make that choice again.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 4:52 p.m. on February 11 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 12. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 11 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Statement on the Death of Charles M. Schulz, Jr.

February 13, 2000

Hillary and I were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Charles M. Schulz, Jr. On the day that our newspapers print his very last "Peanuts" strip, it is especially poignant that we mourn the passing of Charles Schulz himself. For 50 years, his keen eye, his good and generous heart, and his active brush and pen have given life to the most memorable cast of characters ever to enliven our daily papers. The hopeful and hapless Charlie Brown, the joyful

Snoopy, the soulful Linus—even the "crabby" Lucy—give voice, day after day, to what makes us human.

Today, in his final strip, Charles Schulz writes, "Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Linus, Lucy . . . how can I ever forget them. . . ." We can say with certainty that we will never forget them, or their creator, or the many gifts he has given us all.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Jeannie, and their children.

Remarks on Receiving the League of United Latin American Citizens Lifetime Achievement Award

February 14, 2000

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. Well, thank you, President Rick Dovalina. Elvia Morales, thank you very much for reminding us of why we're all here working every day. She did a fine job, didn't she? I was very proud of her. Thank you.

I thank the students from Cesar Chavez Public Charter High School for Public Policy for joining us, and their teachers and principal. Thank you all again for being here, and good luck to you.

I'd like to thank Senator Chuck Robb from Virginia and Congressman Silvestre Reyes from Texas for joining us today. Thank you very much, gentlemen. I want to thank our Secretary of Energy, and my dear friend, Bill Richardson, for the wonderful statement that he made in opening this meeting today.

I thank all the people of our administration who are here, but I would like to especially acknowledge my Deputy Chief of Staff, Maria Echaveste; my Assistant to the President who deals with all the Governors, mayors, and half

the headaches in America, Mickey Ibarra; Administrator of the Small Business Administration Aida Alvarez, whom you've acknowledged already; Army Secretary Louis Caldera, who's here; the President of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, George Muñoz; the Chairwoman of the EEOC, Ida Castro; and the Director of the Selective Service Commission, Gil Coronado. And there are other present and past members of the administration here. I thank you all.

Tornado Damage in Georgia

I have, before I begin—and I know you'll all forgive me, because they, too, are part of our American family—I have to say that I am very saddened by the terrible loss of life and the other damage which occurred as a result of the tornadoes which swept Georgia early this morning. And we're working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which is already there and providing me with regular updates on the situation.

I know that all Americans join me. Let me say, my home State very often had the largest amount of tornado damage in the country in any given year, and the loss of life in Georgia this morning is unusual and terrible. And I ask for your prayers for those people today.

LULAC Lifetime Achievement Award

Let me also say, I am deeply touched by this beautiful award. I have always said that the President's job was reward enough, and no one should give the President an award. And you always have to check your pulse to make sure you're still living, when you get an award, if you're in my business. *[Laughter]*

But having said that, I accept it, and I am delighted to have it, because this has been a lifetime passion of mine. Bill Richardson talked about the people I met in Texas 28 years ago. I was born in a little town in southwest Arkansas which now has one of the Federal migrant centers there, because it's on the way that people come up from Mexico through south Texas and then go all the way up the Mississippi River in their migrant work, all the way to the cherry crop in Michigan.

When I went to Texas 28 years ago, in addition to meeting impressive people, I always begged to be permitted in my work to go to San Antonio and to the Rio Grande Valley. And I just went back to the Rio Grande Valley last

week. When I went there as President, I found that I was the first elected President to go to the valley since Dwight Eisenhower 40 years before. I have been there three times because—partly to help the people there who are doing so well—it's now the third fastest growing area in America, population wise, and they're lifting themselves up; and partly because I want the rest of America to know about their contributions and, generally, the important role that Latinos are going to play in 21st century America.

I also want to say that more than any other person in America, the President accomplishes nothing on his own and would be nothing without all the people who help. So this award really belongs to all the people in this administration, especially my Hispanic appointees whom I've mentioned and two who once were here who aren't anymore, Federico Peña and Henry Cisneros. I thank them for what they did. And I'd like to say a special word of appreciation also to the Vice President, who has done so much, through the empowerment zone program and in so many other ways, to lift the lives of our Hispanic-Americans. And I thank him for that.

I would like to thank all the LULAC members who are here and all the members of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda who are here—and for all you are doing to try to help forge unity among the great diversity within Hispanic America, something many Americans don't know enough about. For all the differences of ethnicity, national origin—and occasionally even a difference of opinion—Hispanics in this Nation are united by common values of faith, family, hard work, by a common vision of a unified future.

When I became President 7 years ago, America was already a very diverse country, not nearly so much as it is today. It was clear to me then that we had to go beyond the kind of divide-and-conquer politics which had dominated our country for many years; that if we could make a virtue of our diversity—if we could not only tolerate one another but celebrate and honor one another—it would be America's meal ticket to the globalized information society of the 21st century.

And so we have worked for 7 years, as your president said, for a society in which there is opportunity for all and responsibility from all and a community of all Americans. And it is

working. We have the strongest economy we have ever had, with the lowest Hispanic unemployment rate in history, as you pointed out, a 20-year low in poverty, over 2 million fewer children in poverty, the lowest welfare rates in 30 years, the lowest crime rates in 30 years. We are moving forward.

But what I would like to say to all of you is that in my judgment—and I say that as a person who is no longer running for any office but a person who looks on these children as America's children—we have only scratched the surface of our potential as a nation. And we have only scratched the surface of the potential of our young people. And we have only scratched the surface of what we can do because of our increasing diversity.

Therefore, it is more important even than it was 7 years ago when I took office in a time of stagnant economy and social difficulty and political gridlock. It is more important now—now that we know we can do better, now that we know we're moving forward—that we understand clearly we have only scratched the surface and that we resolve to say we have only begun to meet the big challenges and seize the big opportunities that are out there for our country and especially for this generation of young Americans in the new millennium.

I would like to mention some of them but begin by saying we have a special opportunity in this year, as we do every 10 years—but since we just changed centuries, it's particularly momentous to begin by getting an accurate picture of precisely who we are as a nation and what we are becoming. That's why I want to say a few words about the vital importance of the census in 2000. It begins next month.

In the 1990 census, 8 million children were uncounted—8 million people were uncounted, and over a quarter of them were children. Parents with limited English often failed to include their children on the forms, or left them out for fear that landlords or housing officials might learn their families had grown, not realizing the information on census forms is totally confidential.

Now, if we believe everybody in our American community counts, we've got to make sure everyone is counted in this year's census. It's important for the Federal investments that are made in States and communities—yes, that's one reason it's important. It's important for the drawing of congressional district lines and the

allocation of representation in Congress. But it is also important because it gives us a picture of where America is. And we compare it with where we were 10 years ago; we can see where we're going.

I must say, as a public official, I found the 1980 and the 1990 census documents extremely important in showing, among other things, the profound impact of education on income for younger workers. If you compare the 1990 census with the 1980 census, it shows you more grippingly than any other study can how important it is for us to get our young people not only out of college but in 1990 through—out of high school but through at least 2 years of college if we expected them to get jobs with growing incomes.

And what this 2000 census will show is how important it is not only to make 2 years of college but 4 years of college available to all the young people in America. These are the kinds of things you learn in the census, because behind all those numbers there are real lives and real life stories. And when you put them all together, you see the patterns emerge. This is a profoundly important issue. If we want to make good decisions about where we're going, we first have to know exactly who we are.

Now, we have, to try to do better in this census, launched a program called "Census in the Schools" that will provide classroom teachers with lesson plans and other materials to encourage children to tell their parents to fill out the forms, to include information on the whole family, and to make it clear that no one outside the Census Bureau, not even other Government agencies, can ever see the information included on the census forms. If every American knew just those things, I believe more Americans would be counted.

Today I am glad to announce that over one million classrooms already have committed to using this "Census in the Schools" material. More orders are coming in every day. I'm also pleased to announce the Census Bureau today is launching three new public service announcements to get that message out, again, that all the census information is strictly confidential. The announcements feature three of my favorite baseball players, Barry Bonds, Derek Jeter, and Ivan Rodriguez. Thank you for doing that.

I also want to congratulate Dr. Ken Prewitt, the Census Bureau Director, and his staff for their hard work and to say a special word of

thanks to the Census Monitoring Board members I appointed, including Cruz Bustamante and Gil Casellas. Thank you very much for what you have done. Thank you, Gil.

Now, let me just say briefly a few words about the other things we have to do if we want to do more than scratch the surface of our potential. I just presented my budget to the Congress last week. The budget contains a lot of new investments, some of which were mentioned. It also, however, continues to pay our debt down. And there's a lot of controversy about that. Some people are saying, "Well, isn't it enough that you got rid of the deficit? Why are you paying the debt down?"

So I want you to know why I hope that all of you will support not only investing more money in education and in health care and in the environment and in new jobs but also paying the debt down. Because if we pay the debt down, every working family in this country with a home mortgage, a car payment, a college loan payment will have lower interest rates. Every struggling small business in America will be able to borrow money at lower cost to expand. And these children, when they become adults, will be able to finance whatever they have to finance at a lower cost than would otherwise be the case if we get the Government out of the business of borrowing so there is more there for the private sector and for individual citizens. Just think of it: We could be out of debt for the first time since 1835.

There's something else I want to say. Even though the primary beneficiaries of this endeavor are the young, it is also important that we do this in a way that takes the benefits of debt reduction and secures Social Security and Medicare for the time when the baby boomers retire, so that we will not impose unbearable burdens on our children and our grandchildren.

When we all retire, those of us in the baby boom generation, the people born between 1946 and 1964, there will only be about two people working for every one person drawing Social Security. It is, therefore, imperative that we begin now—not later, now—to prepare for that day. And because we are fortunate enough to have a strong economy, we can know, if we do the right things today, that these children will not have to worry about raising their children because they can't afford to do that and take care of their parents. So that's another very important thing we have to do.

We have the opportunity to meet the challenge of the aging of America. And the older I get, the more I see that as a very high-class problem. [Laughter] That is a good problem. But it can only be good if our children have greater opportunities than we do, not fewer.

A couple of other things I would like to mention that I think are very important—you were kind enough to say that in 1993 the Congress, by the narrowest of margins, passed a big deficit reduction package that also gave tax relief to 15 million working people—and a lot of them were Latinos—through what is called the earned-income tax credit. It is a good program because it basically gives money back, off taxes, to lower income working people, particularly with children.

I have proposed another big expansion of that, which would help a lot of Hispanic families. It would give more money to families where both the mother and the father are working. It would give lots more money to families that have more than two children. You've talked about coming from a large family. I think this is very important. The way that program works now, it virtually punishes working families that have more than two children at home. I think we ought to keep such families together and reward them and help the parents to succeed. So I hope you will help me to expand that.

I hope you will help me to get another increase in the minimum wage. And I hope that you'll help me with these education programs. My budget would give us enough funds to give after-school and summer school programs to children in every school that's underperforming in the entire country. That's a huge, huge advantage.

Of all the ethnic groups in America, the percentage with the highest—the group with the highest percentage of people without health insurance are Hispanic-Americans. Over 40 million Americans still have no health insurance—more than there were in 1993 when I took office—in 1994 when I tried to find a way to provide coverage to everyone.

We passed a couple of years ago the Children's Health Insurance Program, which gave States the ability to insure children who came from families who were not poor enough for Medicaid but not well enough off to afford private health insurance. We now have 2 million

children in that program. We'll soon have somewhere between 4 million and 5 million, as we get them all enrolled.

The Vice President has made a suggestion that I embraced in the State of the Union to allow all their parents to be enrolled, as well. If we did that, we could insure about 25 percent of all the uninsured people in America. And keep in mind, we're talking about working people here. We're talking about people that get up every day, for very modest earnings, and they pay their taxes. They obey the law. They raise their kids and do the best they can, and they cannot afford health insurance. And with one simple action, we could insure 25 percent of the people in America who don't have health insurance. So I hope you will support that.

And then our Hispanic Education Action Plan was mentioned earlier. This budget has over \$800 million more for that, to try to get tutoring and after-school and mentoring programs specifically targeted at Latino children to help them meet higher standards, to help them finish high school, to help them go to college.

Now, why is that important? Well, you heard Elvia's story. And if I could have anything come out of this ceremony today, by the way, it would be her story, not my speech. Why? Because think of all the obstacles she had to overcome—back and forth to Mexico, this in Spanish, this in English. You know, you hear a lot of people preach about what our children should learn and how everybody ought to learn in English, and I believe that and all that. But they don't think about the practical problems.

Remember the story this young woman told of her life. She has had a heroic journey, to have a degree from a 4-year institution that's a fine institution of higher education. And she did that. Doubtless, she had a lot of support along the way, as she said. But it was still—I mean, it took my breath away to think she's telling the story of her life. She's got one more hurdle she has to leap over.

And I'd far rather people remember her life story than anything I say today—first, because it should inspire these children and people like them all across America; and second, because it would remind people, in the Congress and in other places where we have responsibility, that it's all very well to tell our young people they should be responsible citizens, but when they're doing the best they can, the rest of us

need to pitch in and help them. And we need to give them more support.

I will say again, this is the most sobering thing—I am glad we continue to be a nation of immigrants. The largest group of immigrants still coming to America are people whose first language is Spanish, although they are increasingly a diverse lot, as all of you know. Because so many of our children in our schools are first-generation immigrants, we have the continuing frustrating problem that the dropout rate in high schools is far, far higher among our Hispanic children than among any other group.

Last year we reached a milestone: For the first time ever, high school graduation rates of African-Americans was more or less equal to the high school graduation rate of the white majority. That's a great step forward. We should be proud of that. But the dropout rate among Hispanic children is still high. Why? A lot of them are still quitting to go to work to support their families. An enormous number of others still have serious language problems.

One of the most important things we've tried to do in the last few years is to make sure all of our kids who are in our schools can read independently by the end of the third grade. We have 1,000 colleges sending tutors into the schools now. I noticed Jim Barksdale, a Silicon Valley executive, the founder of Netscape, put over \$100 million into a foundation at the University of Mississippi the other day to do nothing but teach people to make sure they could teach our young people to read—because when children get to junior high school or middle school, as it's commonly called now, and they can't keep up, a lot of people drop out because they're bored stiff because they're not fluent in the language enough to keep learning the material.

So I say to you, remember Elvia's story. It shouldn't be that hard. She was great, but it shouldn't be that hard. We've got to do more to keep all our children in school, get them out of high school, get them on to college. That's what this Hispanic education effort is all about.

And the last point I want to make is, while we've seen a big drop in welfare rolls and a significant but not nearly large enough drop in child poverty, we have to recognize that there are still lots of people in places this economic recovery has left behind. That's why I want to expand the number of empowerment zones and enterprise communities and give people more

incentives to invest in them. That's why I'm trying to pass this big new markets initiative, to give Americans the same incentives to invest in poor areas in America they get to invest in poor areas in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. I want people to invest overseas, but we ought to give them the same incentives to invest in underdeveloped areas right here in the United States and give our people an opportunity, too.

So these are some of the things that I hope we will do. I hope the Congress will also agree to invest more funds in the education of immigrants to teach them English, to teach them civics, to support them.

And finally, let me say, I want to thank those of you who are from Puerto Rico who came up to me today and talked to me about that. I have, ever since I ran for President, been committed to allowing the voteless citizens of Puerto Rico the right to choose for themselves the ultimate status of the island. And again, I have included resources in my budget for them to do that, and I ask Congress to look at this and to stop walking away from this. We cannot—we cannot—continue to pretend that there is any other ultimate resolution to this and to the difficulties that continue to arise, other than letting the people of Puerto Rico decide for themselves.

And I have also done what I could to empower the residents of Vieques to decide for themselves whether the Navy training there should end in 2003. We ought to be a good neighbor, and they ought to be able to decide. And we ought to be able to work around whatever decision they make.

Now, let me just mention one other big issue to me. Bill Richardson and Rick Dovalina were kind enough to refer to all the Hispanic-Americans who have served in this administration. And I'm proud of that. A big part of them, who cannot be here today because they are otherwise occupied, are those whom I have appointed to Federal judgeships. And unlike me, they are not term-limited. They get to stay a long time. Almost half my total appointees are women or minorities. And yet, these appointments have garnered the highest percentages of top ratings from the ABA, the bar association, in 40 years.

Now, one of my frustrations as President right now is that I'm having a hard time getting all these candidates processed and voted on by the Senate. There are three first-rate Hispanic judicial nominees that the Senate has not voted

on yet, and I want to call their names, because I want you to know who they are: Judge Julio Fuentes, for the third circuit, a distinguished civil litigator from Texas; Enrique Moreno, a graduate of Harvard and Harvard Law School, well qualified by the American Bar Association, has still not been given a hearing by the Senate Judiciary Committee—better qualified academically than many, many judges who have been appointed by all previous Presidents of both parties; and Judge Richard Paez, for the ninth circuit, he is a sitting Federal judge. He has finally been promised a vote in March. But he has been waiting—listen to this—for 4 years for the Senate to vote on him. I nominated him 4 years ago.

Now, why is that? Because some people don't want these folks on the court, but they don't want you to know they don't want them on the court, because then you may not want them in the Senate. [*Laughter*] Now, this is not rocket science; this is what's going on. So if you don't want somebody on the court, but you don't want the folks back home to know you don't want them on the court, you just arrange for there never to be a vote.

It's not right. That they think that they're too progressive, they ought to stand up and vote them down. But they ought to—it's time to stop patronizing people or insulting them by playing games with them. Just vote them up or down. They're entitled to it, and they can take it. We can all take it. But when good people agree to submit themselves for Federal service and they are good people and they are not disqualified by the investigation, they're elevated by the investigation, they are entitled to be voted up or down. And I ask you to help us.

Now, again I want to say, I hope that all of you when you leave here will remember that, even though the President should never get awards, I'm tickled to get this one. [*Laughter*] I hope you will remember the story of Elvia Morales' life and try to replicate it. I hope you'll remember these children who came to join us today from the Cesar Chavez Charter School. And I hope you will remember that we have just scratched the surface of what their lives and our life as a nation can be.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:09 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Enrique (Rick) Dovalina, national

president, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC); Elvia Morales, graduate, California State University at Sacramento, who described growing up as a child of immigrants; Irasema Salcido, founder and principal, Cesar Chavez Public Charter High School for Public

Policy; former Secretary of Energy Federico Peña; and former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Henry G. Cisneros. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Interview With Wolf Blitzer on CNN.com February 14, 2000

2000 Presidential Election

Mr. Blitzer. Thank you very much, Lou. We are in the Oval Office here with President Clinton. Mr. Clinton, thank you so much for doing this historic, first-ever on-line news interview with CNN.com.

I just want to set the scene for you and for our audience. This is not only being put forward on CNN.com and other Internet users, but also it will be seen simultaneously on CNN and CNN International. Fifteen minutes after we're completed, there will be an on-line video that people will be able to see, whenever, if they missed it. There will also be a transcript. They will be able to stream and see this as it goes on, on the Internet. So it's a historic moment for the new technology.

I know you've been fascinated by this, so let's get right at it. We have some E-mail questions. First one from Frank Williams in Tinley Park, Illinois: Mr. President, understandably, you're supporting the Presidential candidacy of Vice President Al Gore. But please share your personal political opinions of Senator John McCain and Governor George W. Bush.

The President. I think I should pass on that. I think—I've tried to stay out of this Presidential election. I'm not a candidate, and I don't think any headlines that I make should interfere with the ability of Senator McCain or Governor Bush to make their point. They're going to have an election in South Carolina, and then they'll go on to other States. And I think that—and at some point it might become appropriate for me to say something, maybe at the Democratic Convention or something, or if they make a specific statement about my administration or my record.

But I really believe that the American people—this is their year, their time. And I am

going to vote for the Vice President, and I do support him, because I think he's been the best Vice President in our history by far. And I think he's got a good program for the American people, and I know him to be a good man who will make good decisions.

But I just don't think I should get in the middle of this Presidential race. It only interferes with the voters' ability to draw their own conclusions. And I trust them; they almost always get it right.

Mr. Blitzer. But you do know Senator McCain and Governor Bush?

The President. Sure.

Mr. Blitzer. You've met them, and you have your own opinions of both of them.

The President. I do, and I follow this campaign closely. I'm interested. It's the first time in over 20 years when I've just been an on-looker, so it's been fascinating to me as a citizen. But I don't think that I should say anything right now. And I don't mean to dodge the gentleman's question, but I just think that anything I do would only complicate their lives. And they're making their case to the people, and they're arguing with each other as they should be. And that's the way it ought to be done right now.

Hillary Clinton's Senate Campaign

Mr. Blitzer. All right, we have another E-mail question from Peggy Brown: Do you find it difficult, Mr. President, watching, listening to criticisms of the First Lady as she attempts to capture the Senate seat in New York?

The President. Sure. I mean, of course, I do. I now know how she felt all those years. You know, I love her very much, and I think—I know her better than anybody else, and I believe she'd be a great public official. And I hope the people of New York will put her to work.